

# Conception of Jihad and its Practices in Islam of China

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## Review Article

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## Abstract

Chinese Muslims, as minorities living in Inland China, have never developed a complex or elaborate theory of Jihad in mainstream Chinese culture. However, as a result of being minorities and because of suffering from discriminative policies in the Qing Empire, the Muslims in Yunnan, Qinghai, Gansu and Xinjiang, indeed, launched several holy wars in order to retaliate against the massacres committed by the imperial armies. Some of these Muslims, for example, sacrificed their lives with forms of suicide bombings against the so-called “infidel” enemy. As a result of such oppression, some Muslim scholars of that era interpreted Jihad within an extremist approach. In modern times, Jihad is rendered by the separate movements in Xinjiang as “a key to the gate of the Paradise” in the struggle for Eastern Turkistan. Under the People’s Republic, Jihad is interpreted by the official Islamic associations as an effort to get rid of the selfish desire for constructing a harmonious socialist China, with Muslim scholars frequently emphasizing the peaceful nature of Jihad. Therefore, Jihad is often employed in China by different Muslim groups in various contexts as an instrument for divergent political purposes.

**Keywords:** Jihad; Islam; Muslims; China

## Introduction

Contrary to Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism and Christianity-all of which throughout history have developed comprehensive dogmatic systems-Islam stresses its ritualistic customs based on the Quran and the traditions left by its founder, the Prophet Muhammad. This is particularly true for Chinese Muslims who keenly follow their traditions, traditions that are closely related to common practices that are essential parts of Central Asian nomad traditions intermingled with Chinese Confucianism norms. So, Islam is frequently delineated among the world religions as one with the most simplified teachings to its believers and as one that is easily practiced by its followers. It is, in other words, a religion that emphasizes a way-of-life instead of a very

complicated theoretical persuasion. In examining a theory of Jihad in the Islamic history of China, very little is written in the discourses of Muslim scholarly works in imperial China. This is true even in the debates among Muslim scholars in contemporary China, although the notion of Jihad has been a hot-topic in the media since the 9.11 terrorist attacks [1,2].

Jihad, according to its original intention, is a self-imposed effort for the attainment of moral and religious perfection, which can be divided into two kinds: “the spiritual Jihad or the greater Jihad in opposition to the physical Jihad or the lesser Jihad” [3]. In *Shari’a* (the Islamic law), according to general doctrine and according to historical tradition, Jihad consists of military action with the object of the expansion of Islam and, if need be, of the

defense of Islam, or an aspect of the struggle “to make God’s cause succeed” [4]. The notion of Jihad stems from the Islamic fundamental principle that views itself as the universal religion—a universality that is to be achieved, if necessary, by force [5]. Furthermore, Muslim scholars in concert with the Quran explain that Jihad means an armed struggle against the unbelievers (that is, non-Muslims). Islamic sources, for example, order that Muslims fight the unbelievers unconditionally, the general condition that fighting is only allowed in defense could be said to be understood:

“Then, when the sacred months are drawn away, slay the idolaters wherever you find them, and take them, and confine them, and lie in wait for them at every place of ambush” (9:5) and

“Fight those who believe not in God and the Last Day and do not forbid what God and His Messenger have forbidden—such men as practice not the religion of truth, being of those who have been given the book—until they pay the tribute out of hand and have been humbled” (9:29) [6].

Jihad also is described in Hadith, the second most important source Muslims use to establish Islamic religion. One Hadith, for example, reports that whenever the Prophet appointed a commander to an army or an expedition, he would say:

When you meet your heathen enemies, summon them to three things. Accept whatsoever they agree to and refrain then from fighting them. Summon them to become Muslims. If they agree, accept their territory to the Abode of the Emigrants [i.e., Medina]. If they refuse that, let them know that then they like the Muslim Bedouins and that they share only in the booty, when they fight together with the [other] Muslims. If they refuse conversion, then ask them to pay poll-tax (*jizya*). If they agree, accept their submission. But if they refuse, then ask God for assistance and fight them...” (Sahih Muslim) [7].

Both the Quran and the Hadith, then, reveal the key emphasis of the early history of Islam, in a military sense, to fight the infidels in Jihad.

The most important function of the doctrine of Jihad is that it mobilizes and motivates Muslims to take part in wars against unbelievers, as it is considered to be the fulfillment of a religious duty [8]. One of the ways to acquire greater legitimacy was to wage Jihad against unbelievers, which is one of the main tasks of the lawful Jihad is also a duty. This precept is laid down in all Muslim sources (for instance, the Quran, Hadith, and many works

done by the Muslim scholars specialized in the Islamic law). It is true, however, that one can find in the Quran divergent, and even contradictory, texts that do not emphasize Jihad. These are classified, apart from certain variations of detail, into four categories: (1) Those which enjoin pardon for offences and encourage peaceful negotiations; (2) those which enjoin fighting to ward off aggression; (3) those which enjoin the initiative in attack, provided it is not within the four sacred months; and (4) those which enjoin the initiative in attack absolutely, at all times and in all places [9].

In sum, these differences correspond to the stages in the development of Muhammad’s thought and to the modifications of policy resulting from particular circumstances: (1) The Meccan period during which Muhammad, in general, confines himself to moral and religious teaching, and (2) the Medina period when, having become the leader of a politico-religious community, he was able to undertake, spontaneously, the struggle against those who did not wish to join his community or to submit to his authority. Islamic doctrine holds that the later texts abrogate the former contradictory texts, to such effect that only these of the last category remain indubitably valid; and, accordingly, the rule on the subject may be formulated in these absolute terms: “The fight (Jihad) is obligatory even when they (the unbelievers) have not themselves started it” [10]. Jihad theory adjusted to the changing situation of the early stages of Islamic history. It is important to keep this point in mind as we study Islam in China.

### Different Approaches in Interpreting Jihad in the Imperial China

Islam came to China in the Tang Dynasty (A. D. 618-907). Before the Mongols conquered China, Muslims were mainly confined in the foreign blocks (*Fanfang*) in the seaports of the coast region or in the big cities such as Xi’an, Peking, Guangzhou, Kaifeng and Hangzhou, the imperial capitals and municipals. As traders and guests, they were permitted to live in the enclaves set by the authorities and thus enjoyed the security guaranteed by the government. In such circumstances, Muslims did not need to use Jihad to address the idolatry, unique faith, and unique living habits of the

Chinese hosts because they were generous and tolerant to the immigrant Muslims. In general, Muslims in China had no fundamental conflict with the majority Chinese since there was no pervasive contact between the two before the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Jihad in that period focused on the efforts to maintain the Islamic faith and practices in a strange land

which adopted the polytheism and the Muslims who died in the strange country were entitled with *shahid* (martyr) because they exercised such a Jihad when they lived in China. Many tombstones in Quanzhou of Fujian, for example, were carved with statements such as these: "Say: 'Surely we are Allah's, and to Him we shall return.'" (Quran 2:156) Whoever dies in the alien land therefore dies a martyr (Hadith)" [11].

Such a peaceful state changed after the Mongols established the Yuan dynasty in China (1271-1368), as the Mongols employed many Muslims from Central Asia and Western Asia as the military and administrative officials in its imperial government. The Muslims were very powerful and a part of the ruling class. One specific event that indirectly mentioned Jihad occurred in the time of Kublai Khan (reign 1260-1294). The Christians reported to the royal court that there was a verse in the Quran: "Slaughter all idolaters in any time and any circumstance." Kublai Khan was very angered at the statement and ordered some learned Muslim scholars to come to the Court where he asked the eldest one, Bahai Din Bhaty, the following question: "Is there such a verse in your Quran?" Bhaty answered: "There is one." Khan said: Given God has ordered to kill infidels, why do you not kill them?" Bhaty replied: "The time is not ripe, we cannot do that." Khan was enraged and said: "I can put you to death." So he sentenced Bhaty to death. However, the Premier Amir Ahmad, the supreme judge Bahai Din and Amir Danishman, stopped Khan with the pretext that they should ask others' opinions. They invited Mullah Hamid Din, a judge from Samarkand, and consulted with him on such a question. This judge replied: "There is [indeed] a verse [in the Quran]." Khan asked: "Why do [Muslims] not kill the idolaters?" Mullah Hamid Din answered: "The supreme God orders to kill the idolaters; but you are not of them since you write the name of God on the title of your imperial orders and official documents. The idolaters do not recognize the oneness of God and rather share Him with idols, therefore, they do not accept God the Greatest." Khan was very pleased with these words because he resonated with them over the explanation. He treated Mullah Hamid very politely, and comforted him. Because of this sound explanation, others were released from punishment [12].

This story demonstrates the fact that the Muslims who served for Kublai Khan were indeed familiar with the verses concerning Jihad in the Quran, but they interpreted the Jihad concept in different ways. Some explained it with a dogmatic attitude, while others explained it more diplomatically. The polarization in rendering the holy text in this historical stage of Islam shows the tendencies that

existed between the extremes embraced by the clerics who came from the Islamic world and the social elites and Chinese rulers embraced.

### Jihad against the Infidels in Xinjiang

The Islamization of the Uighur people in Xinjiang (*Shariqa Turkistan* or the Eastern Turkistan, or China's Turkistan) took a very different route from that of inland China. The Sufi missionaries and the holy war (Jihad) launched by the newly converted Uighur Muslims played a very important role in the expansion of Islam in this vast desert scattered with oases. *Shuhada'* (martyrs) who fell in the battles fighting against the Buddhist forces for the course of Islam became important figures in the early history of Islam in Xinjiang. The Jihad undertaken by Sutuk Bughra Khan and his successors (the rulers of the Qara Khanate) and the violent assaults launched by the powerful Buddhist kingdom in Khotan of the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries lasted longer than a century [13].

Sutuk Bughra Khan, the first Uighur Khan who converted to Islam under the guidance of a Sufi Sheikh from Central Asia, died in A. D. 955 and was buried in Atush where a famous *mazar* (tomb, grave) was dedicated to him and his Sufi teacher. The newly converted Khan and his Islamic Qara-Khan Dynasty immediately began a series of military expeditions into the Buddhist territory of the Kingdom of Khotan. Through a long process and a large-scale Jihad, the Muslim army won the war. They, however, also paid a very high price. In their prolonged Jihad, one Khan and several royal family members, along with more than ten thousand Muslim soldiers, became martyrs and were buried in the desert [14].

In the early stage of this Jihad, the Muslim army of the Qara-Khan Dynasty was at a disadvantage, and even the Imams were captured by the army of the Khotan Kingdom. However, due to the large Muslim army, the strong Jihad spirit, and the *shahid* (martyrdom) spirit, the Buddhist kingdom was defeated and became occupied by the Muslim troops. The Qara-Khan Dynasty encouraged its army with the slogan "to wipe out the infidels" in the process of Jihad against Khotan Kingdom. The Muslim soldiers thought that if they died in Jihad, then they were *shuhada'* and would go on to live in Paradise [15].

According to the Uighur oral sources, Hassan Ali Arslan Khan, the grandson of Sutuk Bughra Khan, was the commander of the army of the Qara-Khan Dynasty in that period of Jihad and was also a very pious Muslim. Most of his life was spent in the Jihad against the infidels (referring to the Buddhists). He, therefore, achieved many

triumphs against the Khotan Kingdom. At the end of the first month of Hejira 388 (A. D. 998), the Muslim army fiercely fought against the Buddhist army in Odam Qara. Arslan Khan and his whole Muslim army were slain in a sudden Buddhist attack as he was leading the Muslim army out for the Morning Prayer. Arslan Khan's beheaded corpse was buried in the desert where he fell and afterwards the tomb became Mazar Odam, a place revered by the Uighur Muslims even till today. Mazar Odam was visited by hundreds of thousands of Uighur Muslims annually in the 1980s. So the ritual of the venerating *shuhada'* and memorizing Jihad spirit at Mazar Odam have become one of the biggest Islamic activities in the Uighur Muslim society. Because Mazar Odam utilized Jihad, it has had a strong impact on Islam within the whole region of South Xinjiang [16].

### Jihad in Qinghai and Gansu in Emperor Qianlong Reign (1736-1795)

The Salar Muslims migrated from Samarkand and settled in the Qinghai and Gansu border region and lived a very poor life under the oppressive political persecution and economic depression during the mid-Qing dynasty (the 18<sup>th</sup> century). Islamic inspiration gave Muslims during this oppression the political support and the spiritual solace that they needed. These Muslims put their faith entirely in Allah (*huda* in Persian) and aspired to enter Paradise by practicing Islam. The obligatory duty of Jihad for the Muslims additionally stimulated great religious passion. Thus, they were ready to sacrifice their life in protecting their Islamic faith [17].

In the eye of the imperial rulers, the Jihad mood of Salar Muslims was recorded in the official archives as "inherently venerated violence and liking to use force" [18]. Even a Salar scholar admitted that Salars advocated Jihad spirit in their religious life [19]. Su Sishisan, a Salar Akhond living in Xunhua, was a disciple of Ma Mingxin who founded a new Sufi group called Jahriyya (who chanted their prayers with in high tones in contrast with Khafiyya who chanted their prayers in a low tone). The Qing Empire charged the Jahriyya as "heretical" in handling the disputes of the two sect affairs. However, the split in Islamic rank was sometimes superseded by the temporary unity of the two, especially when the Salar Muslims faced a strong enemy such as the Qing Empire. The slogans raised by the Sufi groups in the anti-Qing Dynasty struggle were: "Fight for the course of Allah", "Defend the religion of Islam", "March on the road of *shahid* (martyr)", "The Door of the Paradise opens widely now, the [Sufi] saints of the previous generations are standing at the Gate of the Paradise welcome us!" The Sufi Muslims took advantage

of these slogans to stimulate the religious enthusiasm from their Muslim brothers to join the Jihad [20].

In Jihad the Salar Muslims, led by Su Sishisan, fought against the imperial army to the very end, taking stronghold in the Hualin Mountain and sacrificing their lives; no one surrendered to the Qing authorities [21]. The leaders of the Muslim insurgency encouraged all Salar Muslims to arm themselves against the Qing imperial army with these words: "If we surrender, we betray Islam; only we die all together, we can enter to the Paradise" [22].

In the course of the actual fighting, the Muslims in Northwest China sometimes regarded other groups as "heretical" and the work of fighting against alien groups was a "Jihad", and died for the course was a *shahid*. Therefore, the Muslims from different groups often fought each other, In the actual fighting, some Salar Muslims even declared that those who killed other group were heroes, and if they sacrificed their lives, then they were *shahid* in the course of Jihad. The Qing rulers took advantage of the rift within the ranks of Islam to incite one Sufi group against another group in order to finally subdue the Muslim insurgent forces in Northwest China.

### Jihad of the Hui Muslims in Yunnan against the Infidels

In the 1840s, with the gradual disintegration of the imperial power, the Han Chinese in Yongchang of Yunnan established many secret organizations such as the "Society of Burning Incense". The Han Chinese also practiced a lot of superstition in their folk religion. For example, on the occasion of the 29<sup>th</sup> of the Third month in the Chinese Lunar Year, it was the congregation of the emperors of five mountains (East, South, West, North and Central). On that day, Han Chinese would escort the portraits of the emperors of the five mountains moving from the Longevity Pavilion to Temple of the Eastern Mountain in Zhuge Camp of Southern Town for their prayers. Such a ritual consisted of a long procession, including the participation of many Buddhist monks and Taoist monks, while chanting the religious texts and performing their prayers. Usually this long procession of the Han Chinese passed by the gate of a mosque located on Yongfeng Street in the town. At that time the mosque had one or two hundred Muslim students studying Islam. When the welcome procession for the Five Mountainous Emperors' portraits passed by the gate of Mosque, there were dozens of Muslim students standing outside of Mosque gate to watch the Han ritual procession. All of them despised the Han Chinese folk religion. Some of the radicals not only used words to insult the procession, but others even threw bagasses and melon seed husks to

taunt the people who played the roles of the divine generals on horsebacks in the front of the procession. Such insulting behavior angered many Han Chinese, both the ritual participants and the audience standing on the roadside to watch. It often started a quarrel or developed into a group fight. This kind of conflict occurred for several years, and resulted in deep hatred between the Hui Muslims and the Han Chinese in Yongchang. A few learned Hui gentry asked the Imams or Akhonds of Mosque to lock the gate in order to prevent Muslim students from coming out of the Mosque to provoke such a confrontation at the occasion of the Welcoming Five Mountainous Emperors Ritual. However, there were always trouble-makers who jumped over the wall of the Mosque and kept causing mischief.

The Han Chinese appealed to the local authorities for justice and, as a result, the mandarins of Baoshan County once sentenced to death by caging a Hui Muslim named Ma Youde who was the most responsible for provoking such a confrontation. But this did not stop the clashes between Hui Muslims and the Han Chinese since the Muslims often declared that “to attack infidels is a merit not a guilt”. The source of the conflicts between Hui Muslims and Han Chinese was the clerics of the Mosque who often taught the Muslim students with such the extremist theory of “Attack or kill the infidels (Han Chinese) is Jihad, hence, is a merit”, reported by a Muslim intellectual who lived in the Republic [23].

There is another story of Hui Muslims who engaged in Jihad via a method of suicide bombings with the intent to kill imperial officials. The insurgency of Hui Muslims in 1872 came at a very difficult time, namely through the imperial army led by Yang Yuke, the commander laid siege to Dali, the headquarters of the Muslim regime and Muslim Hui army. The Muslim force stationed in Xiao Guanyi Village wanted to turn down the disadvantaged situation and plotted to kill Commander Yang and to annihilate his troops who had set up camps in western Dali. They sent an invitation to Yang to come to the mosque to attend the celebration of a birthday party for the Prophet Muhammad which would be held on the Ninth Day, the Fifth Month in Chinese lunar year. Yang decided to participate in this event because the Muslims proposed to make a peaceful surrender after the Islamic festival. Eventually the Muslims prepared to use this opportunity to lure Yang’s troops into the Mosque where they had buried dynamite under the Mosque- floor. By this pretext of surrender and Islamic festival celebration, the Muslims wanted to eliminate the imperial army, even if it required them to sacrifice their own lives in doing so. As Yang arrived at the Mosque and was invited to a rich banquet arranged in the

Northern Wing Building, he sat down at the table and started to eat. He did not know that just under his seat there was large quantity gun powder ready for explosion. However, a few Hui military adjutants served in Yang’s army smelled the gun powder and heard a Muslim shouting “*Atash!*” (Persian language: fire, to light, or ignite the powder). While the Hui officials heard this word, they at once understood the meaning of *Atash* and immediately helped Yang to escape the pending catastrophe. Yang was not hurt by the subsequent explosion that destroyed the whole mosque. If this event plotted by Muslims in Yunnan had been successful, it would have been the first case of a suicide bombing as Jihad in the history of Chinese Islam [24].

### Jihad against Muslim Adversaries and the Profane Incidents in the Republic

To justify the struggle against their Muslim adversaries, the groups such as traditional or radical or extreme, who declared themselves as the “orthodox”, would brand the others as unbelievers for their neglect in adhering to and in enforcing the strict rules of Islam [25]. Since Muslims consider the fighting against unbelievers as Jihad, a Muslim faction probably regards those who do not adhere to their Islamic practices as “*kafir*” (infidel). They will, therefore, wage a Jihad for the course of Allah.

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Ma Wanfu (1853-1934, style name Ma Guoyuan), a Dongxiang Muslim fulfilled his pilgrimage to Mecca and accepted the ideas of the Wahhabi Movement in Saudi Arabia. He wanted to reform Islam in China after he returned to his hometown in Northwest China from his *hajji* journey. In the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century he founded the Ikhwani Movement in China, which denounced many practices influenced by Chinese culture which he thought “detracted” from Islam. He showed his rivals that he was ready for Jihad against any Sufi group that embraced Chinese cultural influence and, from his perspective, went astray from Islam. He openly declared in Hezhou (Linxia, the small Mecca in China’s Islam) in 1908: “The Ikhwani Movement will unite all Islamic factions and Sufi orders.” He also declared: “It is *shahid* if one shed blood and sacrifice his life for Islam [in this Jihad]!” He called his followers to “down Sufi orders and demolish the *qubba* (Sufi saint’s tomb)” in order to pave a way for the unification of Islam in China [26]. Here, in terms of Ma Wanfu, Jihad could be referred to as war against any Sufi group that betrayed Islam due to their absorption of Chinese cultural elements, which he thought endangered Islam.

In the 1930s a number of Uighur nationalists led by Muhammad Amin and his two brothers founded the Islamic Amirate in Khotan, a part of the Eastern Turkistan Republic. They waged a Jihad to kill the Han Chinese in South Xinjiang. In this Jihad the Uighurs fought for their independence, even while the Swedish missionaries experienced fanatical religious persecution and violent treatment. Additionally, a Hui Muslim-force led by the Muslim warlord Ma Zhongying also launched a Jihad in an attempt to try to liberate Xinjiang from the ruling of *Kafirs* and to establish an Islamic state in China's Central Asia. General Ma's Jihad destroyed the East Turkistan Republic in Kashgar with his Muslim Hui army in 1934. Therefore, a Jihad in Xinjiang actually involved the confrontation between two Muslim groups: the Hui Muslims and the Uighur Muslims. Both believed in Islam, but fought each other simultaneously in Jihad. Apparently, because of the variety in ethnicities and because of the differences in political interests, opposing Jihads could take place between the Hui Muslims and Uighur Muslims. Such a Jihad was certainly of a military nature, resulting in hostility and animosity between the two sets of Muslims. However, Jihad could be a struggle against the presumed profaning of Allah caused by Han Chinese.

In September 1932 the magazine *South China Literature* in Shanghai published an article entitled, "Why Muslims Do not Consume Pork Meat" in which the author said that Muslims worship pig as their god. This blasphemous incident to Islam caused great indignation from Muslims in all over China. The Muslims in Shanghai, Peking, and Nanking organized a "Delegation of Safeguarding Islam" and marched to Nanking, the capital of the Republic China to appeal to the authorities to punish the author of the article. They furthermore demanded the editor-in-chief of that magazine to apologize in public. Before participating in the demonstration about 20 Hui Muslims in a mosque of Shanghai undertook the major ablution ritual (to wash their whole body) in order to prepare their status as *shahid* in case the government cracked down on their protest [27].

### Jihad in the People's Republic

The Communists took the power in 1949 and China entered a period of Socialist Revolution and Socialist Construction. Since atheism is an essential part in the ruling ideology of Marxism, Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought in the 1950s and the 1960s that all religions were backward, anti-scientific, and counter-revolutionary. In the middle of the 1950s, the Chinese government launched the Land Reform and the Religious Reform Movement, wherein real estate that originally belonged to

mosques and *qubba* (tomb of Sufi order) was nationalized. As a result, many Akhonds or Imams were deprived of their power and some were forced into secularization. The Salar, Dongxiang, Baoan and Hui Muslims in Northwest China led by their clerics revolted with an armed Jihad against such a policy. However, their Jihad was denounced as rebellions or counter-revolutionary riots, and they were suppressed by the government [28].

During the Cultural Revolution, the Hui Muslims in Shadian of South Yunnan, which were led by Ma Bohua and were organized by *Hizbu Allah* (Party of God), raised a Jihad against the Leftist policy of the Gang of Four. The aim of the Hui Muslims was to fight for their religious freedom and to protest the blasphemy imposed on them by the local authorities. In this struggle more than 1600 Hui Muslims died, 5000 were injured, and several Muslim villages were totally destroyed by the gunfire from PLA [29].

Some Uighur Muslims in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region frequently launched Jihad movements in their national separatist activities since the 1980s. The Wahhabiyya movement, for example, has been intertwined with a nationalist campaign for an independent Eastern Turkistan. It has vocally condemned Sufi mystical practices and pro-Beijing tendencies in social and political life, and it has also attacked the implementation of family-planning programs among Turkic Muslims. Some Wahhabiyya followers, furthermore, advocate a fundamentalist theory of Jihad, the killing or expelling of 'infidels' (Han Chinese) from their land [30]. The private *madrasahs* (Islamic school) even recruited *talips* (religious students) to undergo martial arts training for the military Jihad against the Chinese rulers. They organized Jihad units, let the youths watch Jihad video films, and collectively pledge for Jihad war [31]. The violent events have intermittently irrupted and reached a peak on July 5, 2009 when about 200 people died in bloody riots in Urumqi. Afterward some Uighurs used contaminated needles to infect Han Chinese with diseases in Xinjiang in order to incite terror for revenge in the separatist movement severally cracked down by Chinese government. Recently, on July 18, 2011, a group of the Uighur attacked a police station and killed four Chinese in Khotan. In this terror assault the Uighur gang upheld the black Jihad flag for their independent operation [32]. The Turkic national separatist movement even gains support from the international terrorism. According to an al-Qaida video released by the media on Oct. 8, 2009 (*Christian Science Monitor*), Al-Qaida militant preacher, Abu Yahya al-Libi, urged the Uighurs to launch a Jihad war against China after the bloodshed took place in Urumqi. Libi was a

veteran of Afghanistan's wars and about 40 years old, a native Libyan. He escaped from US custody at Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan in July of 2005. He was presumed to be in hiding along Pakistan's lawless border with Afghanistan, and he was supposedly to be the person second-in-command to Shaykh Zawahiri, the assistant of Osama Ben Laden [33].

To tackle this extremism in Jihad interpretation, the China Islamic Association founded an agency entitled "China Islamic Affairs Guidance Committee" to explain Jihad in a more moderate way. For this purpose it published a new edition of the Sermon Collection used by Imams or Akhonds in their speeches in mosque's Friday Congregation. This new edition sought to uphold the greater Jihad and to limit the lesser Jihad. The greater Jihad, advocated by the official Islamic religion, is the struggle against the selfish desire. It cited a Hadith saying: "Once the Muslims returned Medina from a battle the Prophet Muhammad said: 'We have returned from a lesser Jihad to a greater Jihad.' Selfish desire is a *shaidan* (devil) in the mind of people and has severely dangerous consequences. As a result, people need to prevent it. Practice of the "Five Pillars" (reciting, prayer, fasting, pay religious alms, pilgrimage), it is argued, is the best way to fight against selfish desire. The struggle against selfish desire is a greater Jihad in maintaining righteous faith and perfecting morality. What is the manifestation of selfish desire? An Imam in China points out that the following defines selfish desire: Laziness in work, jealousy of other's success, stinginess to those who are in need, easily angered, arrogance, greed in owning money, excessive enjoyment of material pleasure, dishonesty in trade, hurtfulness to others for self-interest, taking public funds for personal purpose, abusing others, and engaging in corruption, etc. Every Muslim, then, must be armed with Islamic morality and regard selfish desire as the biggest *dushman* (Persian: enemy) [34].

The official agency holds that the content of the Greater Jihad is all of one's efforts and struggle should be based on the faith for Muslims, more specifically the purification of man's soul. It refers to the endeavors against the individual selfish desire, expelling any guilt, seduction, jealousy, suspicion and hatred. It encourages people to behave as open-minded, just, tolerant, and to struggle for the course of God.

It also includes: arduous study, hard work, and the improvement of one's life, all while promoting the good and prohibiting evil. In summary, the main theme of the greater Jihad is the efforts and struggles to avoid literal

war according to the statement given by China Islamic Association [35].

The lesser Jihad regarded by the agency is the one of a more narrow scope, namely the launching of Muslims in armed struggle in the defense of justice against those who persecute the Islamic righteous faith. Jihad is a conditioned one. For Muslims Islam is a religion of loving peace, Allah sends his Prophet Muhammad to spread the truth and Islam; it begins with philosophic reason and a beautiful teaching to instruct people, so do not use force to convict people. Muslims use a peace, a non-violent method to spread Islam. In the beginning of Islamic history, the idolaters joked and attacked Prophet Muhammad as he taught Islam. However, the Prophet did not use the lesser Jihad to fight back the Quraysh noblemen, he was restrained with patience. Only when the lives of Muslims were threatened by violence and persecution did the Muslims start the armed struggle. "To those against whom war is made, permission is given (to fight), because they are wronged". (22:39) But if the enemy intended to make peace, Muslims should return with peace. The lesser Jihad refers to the hard efforts in the justice and righteousness of war. It is not a random action from an individual, but an organized action summoned by the Islamic leader. Nevertheless, the lesser Jihad is always a fair and straight way. Those activities such as explosions, assassinations, sabotage and other types of violence and terrorism have nothing to do with lesser Jihad, that means the China Islamic Association labeled all activities done by the Uighur separatists as "terrorism", nothing to do with Islam; its practices are guaranteed by the constitution. In Islam, the greater Jihad is an imperial obligation without any condition, while the lesser Jihad is a complementary duty with certain condition the official Islamic association made the abovementioned statements in its propaganda driving [36].

### Discourse of Jihad among the Chinese Muslim Scholars

In light of the recent Islamic revival movements, which have drawn ample attention in the international communities, people often are misled by biases against Islam-biases that often carry labels such as "terrorism", "violence". In such circumstances, even Islam in China has often suffered from such discrimination in public opinion. To encounter such an adversarial situation, Muslim scholars who hold no-official (that means these scholars are very independent scholars, since they have no official titles, they do the research with more objective approach) position in China have organized an online discussion about Jihad. The following is my translation of the internet

discourse run by a Chinese Muslim organization into English. The content actually is the responses of a few Imams to the questions raised by the Hui Muslims online.

Question from the Audience: "What is the condition for the Jihad in force (that is, to strike back out of self defense)?"

Akhond Nana Answers: Jihad's legitimacy, which here means "in the circumstance of the invasion from outside, or being attacked, or being oppressed, Muslims have the right to strike back out of self-defense" [37].

Jihad is only announced by the commander of Muslims (Imam) based on the Islamic law for the self-defense; no other person can issue the order of Jihad, except an Imam. Before Muslims start a holy war, they should preach Islam to the opposition. If the enemy accepts Islam, then the Muslims should give up the fight. If the opposition wants peace, then the Muslims should immediately stop the war. God says: "But if the enemy inclines towards peace, do thou (also) incline towards peace, and trust in God." (8:61) While the Muslims engage in Jihad by force, they should follow such rules of courtesy: Do not hurt the old, women, children and the clerics; do not destroy the temple or church; do not damage the orchard, crops and kill cattle. Do not hurt the messenger sent by the enemy. All these show evidently that the spirit of Islam is to protect life and prohibit killing the innocent people. God Says: "If any one slew a person- unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land-it would be as if he slew the whole people; and if any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people (5:32)" [38].

Akhond Xinyue (Crescent) Answers the Questions from the Audience on Jihad: Sayyid Abdulla Mawdudi, the religious scholar from Pakistan, in his book *Way of Islamic Life*, said that "Jihad is to strive for by all means, not only through mouth, pen but also through sword to spread the words of Allah" [39]. Islamic Jihad as an important part of Islam has a conspicuous position in Islam. The Quran and Hadith, two important sources of Islam, refer to Jihad as important, and call Muslims to fight for faith. The Hadith regards Jihad as the most important aspect of Islam. One piece of Hadith records the word of the Prophet: "The peak of a thing is Islam, pillar is its prayer, and its most important part is Jihad" [40]. The Quran talks on Jihad and says "Fighting is prescribed for you" (2:216) "The one who fights for the course of God will gain victory for ever and will be rewarded by God; The one who dies for the course of God will gain more than others, they do not need to wait for the Last Day, they can immediately enter the Paradise. "(There is) a parable of the Garden which the righteous are promised; in it are rivers of water incorruptible; rivers

of milk of which the taste never changes; rivers of wine, a joy to these who drink; and rivers of honey pure and clear (47:15)" [41].

All regulations on Jihad in the Islamic inscription become the original driving force for Muslims to engage in holy war. Islamic Jihad also has its theoretical basis in doctrine. According to the creed, the whole world is divided into two parts: *dar al-islam* and *dar al-harb*, or the territory of Islam and the territory of war. The former refers to the area ruled by Islam, including that which is inhabited by Muslims and non-Muslim areas but ruled by Muslim rulers; the latter refers to the areas outside Islam or other areas in the world ruled by infidels.

In theory the aim of Jihad is to spread Islam to the whole world, and to recognize and believe in Allah by all mankind. Therefore, constant war always exists between *dar al-islam* and *dar al-harb*, as a result, such a war is called Jihad in Islam. In the truce of Jihad, it is allowed for Muslims and infidels to cross the border and to establish diplomatic and trade relationship for both sides; however, the two sides cannot have a permanent peace agreement unless *dar al-harb* become *dar al-islam*. In the period of the ascension of Islam, some Muslim thinkers proposed the principles of "impossible coexistence between the Islamic state and non-Islamic state", of "final aim in Islam is to change the whole world into *dar al-islam*", of "Muslims must turn *dar al-harb* into *dar al-islam* gradually by Jihad" [42]. These principles have determined the relationship of the Islamic world with its surroundings for a considerable long period of history, and made Muslims constantly expand their forces, and preaching Islam by the ways of violence or non-violence, and realized the Islamization of the whole West Asia and North Africa [43].

An Imam in China even quoted the words from Karl Marx, the founder of Communism, as latter commented on the doctrinal basis and source of Islamic Jihad: "The Quran and the Islamic law which is based on the Quran put various nations' geographies and humanities into a simple formulation, namely: divide them into two kinds of states and peoples-orthodoxies and infidels. The infidels are *harb*, namely the enemy. Islam declares that the infidels are not protected by its law, hence, it has formed a constant bilateral hostility between Muslims and infidels" [44]. Such humanism has proved and encouraged any type of war to have a sacred significance in theory. The lofty position and the regulations on Jihad rectified by Islamic inscription and its doctrine doubtlessly are the most important elements that make Islamic Jihad so frequent in history, and the Muslims are ready to die as martyrs, and they do not fear death because of their commitment to God [45].



Akhond Xinyue (Crescent) Answers the Question from the Audience: "And fight them on until there is no more tumult or oppression, and there prevail justice and faith in God" (8:39) "Then fight in God's cause" (4:84). Nevertheless, Jihad was an inevitable consequence of the emergence and spreading of Islam and of the historical process of the Arabian society; it is a logically inevitable consequence of opposing idolaters' persecution and invasion, of defeating the idolatry worship, of completing the unity of the Arabia peninsula, and of speeding up the development of the Arabia society.

In trace of the reasons for Islamic Jihad and its formulation process mentioned above, we can see that the nature of Islamic Jihad is to maintain and to spread Islam; it pinpoints firstly the unbelievers and, secondly, the persecutors or evil. This nature of Jihad expresses the duality clearly: on one hand one is to expand and conquer, on the other hand one is to resist evil. Therefore, one is to attack, another is to defend. This duality parallels the duality of the characters of Arab nation. At present we need to avoid idolaters and infidels, or to teach the people with the suffering in Hell and promise the believers with the pleasure of Paradise. We can only do that because we have no sufficient power right now. While we have enough power we do not need to exhaust it in propaganda. We must have wisdom, and we must measure all things carefully [46].

However, a Muslim professor in his article published by a Muslim website gave his comments on definition of Jihad which differentiate from the official version and the explanation done by some scholars. Dr. Sha Zongping, a Hui Muslim scholar who is teaching Islam in Beijing University, has criticized the opinion advocated by some non-Muslim scholars that al-Qaida organization led by Osama Ben Laden was a terrorist one and that the attack on the World Trade Center was also a terrorist action. He has further criticized the argument in the book entitled *History of Islam in Xinjiang Region, China* that the Caliphs in the 7<sup>th</sup> century embarked on a series of holy wars in order to extend the territory of the Arab Empire with a force that was basically a type of invasion war. On the other hand, Dr. Sha also criticizes some Muslim scholars in China who tried to dilute or deliberately avoid the meaning of military Jihad, even deny its Arabic original meaning. He thinks these Muslim scholars use the general implication of Jihad to replace its embodied Islamic terminology, therefore, to reduce its special implication of military nature [47]. Dr. Sha holds that such a stand taken by these Muslim scholars could not be accepted by academic criterion. As one of the representatives of the Hui Muslims in China Dr. Sha

regards Ben Laden as a heroic fighter and thinks that his war against the American superpower is a just Jihad [48]. Many Chinese Muslims in the internet websites or in private express similar opinions [49]. While the death news of Osama Ben Laden was reported by the media in China, lot of Chinese Muslims felt so sad and they posted the condolence messages, and mourning him as a martyr in the poetic praising essays and thought that his death was a great loss in the Jihad course of the global Islamization.

## Conclusion

As the minorities living among Confucianism and later on in a Communism dominated society, Muslims in China are certainly too far away to elaborate a completed theory of Jihad since they live in a marginal zone so remote from the highland of the Islamic world and are so weak in forces in comparison with the cultural mainstream. However, Muslims are able to do the contextual reaction simultaneously with the changed situation from history to present. For instance, in the early stages of the history of Islam in China, Jihad was interpreted by the immigrant Persian, Turkic and Arab Muslims as the means to maintain Islamic faith and Islamic tradition in a foreign land; In the Mongol dynasty, Jihad was used as a holy war to kill infidel and to conquer land where unbelievers resided since Muslims were part of the ruling class; In the time of the Qing Empire Jihad was exercised by Muslims as the fighting against the discriminative policy and oppressive state; In the Republic (years) Jihad was rendered for the struggle against the religious blasphemy of Non-Muslims and against the rival Sufi groups which practiced mysticism—that is, the Islamic absorption of Chinese cultural elements; In the People's Republic Jihad was embarked on by the different Muslim groups in different ways for their efforts during drastic politic changes.

The Hui Muslims launched insurgencies as their living right and religious freedom was threatened in the 1950s, and the Turkic Muslims used violent ways to express their demand for a national independent identity. The official Islamic agency interprets Jihad for the purpose of peace in order to be employed for national integration and for the security of national sovereignty. Muslim scholars and clerics also read Jihad based on their interpretation from *Shari'a* and Hadith, the fundamental sources of Islam in their struggle to keep their faith and practices within the traditional Islam. There is a tension in reaction to Jihad from Muslims in China: The tendency of authentic Islam influenced by Central Arab Islam encounters the tendency of local Islam, which is monitored by Chinese society and non-Islamic cultural forces. To reduce this tension a few

Muslim scholars suggested Confucius being a prophet in "Eastern Land" (mean China) therefore, the Chinese non-Muslims should not be treated as *kafirs* (unbelievers), thus it ought not to use Jihad to fight against them as enemy [50]. Nevertheless the way Jihad is interpreted serves as the instrument for political interests and for the legitimacy of different political groups within Islamic rank.

In my opinion, both tendencies take a utilitarian approach by treating Jihad for maximal gain in the survival and the improvement of the social context in which Muslims in China live and defend their rights. Jihad for Islam in China could be very moderate, reasonable and peaceful in nature just as the Shaykh of Alzhar University said: "Jihad in Islam cannot be understood as to enforce people to believe one religion or one sect, because religion cannot be enforced. Hence, Jihad advocated by Islam is to defend the rights, not to force others to believe in Islam." The Shaykh of Alzhar University also took the law of war in *Shari'a* as an example to explain that in any circumstance, the law of war in *Shari'a* always attempts to avoid the war crimes and the massacres we today have witnessed [51]. Jihad in China also could be violent, militaristic and terroristic in nature if the external environment for Muslim communities becomes hostile or discriminatory, or if politics shifts to an unstable or chaotic society that will easily lead to ethnic and religious tension while the authorities undertake some kind of tough-handed policy. If there are such circumstances, both peaceful and militaristic Jihad from Muslim communities against hostile forces emerging within Chinese society look very possible in the future. Islam in China always reflects Islam in the world, especially since the center of the Islamic world is in the driver's seat of the global push in China and is in close contact with the Islamic world. Furthermore, Jihad will never be given up even it is kept in low profile in the face of strong anti-terrorism sentimental enforcements from non-Muslims. Its aim is the same both in history and in the present in China: the time is not ripe for a military Jihad and Islam will certainly conquer the world in the future. Hence, the alternative between the peaceful and the military nature in Jihad depends upon the social context in China, and Muslims likely will take spontaneously action in their great efforts for their minority rights and survival.

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